CONAN THE BARBARIAN

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# CONAN THE BARBARIAN

## THE CLAWS OF THE TIGRESS

BARRY SMITH

FROM OUT OF EARTH'S DIM, FORGOTTEN PAST-- FROM THE CENTURIES WHICH SPRAWL BETWEEN THE SINKING OF ATLANTIS AND THE DAWNING OF HISTORY--COMES--

# CONAN THE BARBARIAN!™

# ZUKALA'S DAUGHTER

IN A POOL OF ITS OWN LIFE'S-BLOOD, THE *SUN* LIES DYING---

FURTIVE *PEASANTS* SEEM TO QUICKEN THEIR PACE, AND FEARFUL GLANCES ARE CAST BACKWARD OVER HUNCHED SHOULDERS---

OR IS IT ONLY A BARBARIAN'S RAMPANT *IMAGINATION* THAT SENSES AN ALMOST VISIBLE *SHUDDER* RIPPLING THE BACK-BONE OF THIS REMOTE *ZAMORIAN VILLAGE*?

STORY INSPIRED BY THE POEM "ZUKALA'S HOUR" WRITTEN BY ROBERT E. HOWARD, CREATOR OF CONAN

STAN LEE PRESENTS AN ALL-NEW SWORD-AND-SORCERY SAGA BY:
ROY THOMAS WRITER and BARRY SMITH ARTIST
FRANK GIACOIA INKER || SAM ROSEN LETTERER

346-Z

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ON YOUR WAY TO *SHADIZAR THE WICKED*, ARE YE? VISITED THE PLACE ONCE *MYSELF*, WHEN I WERE YOUNGER.

YE'LL DO WELL WITH THE *LADIES* THERE, IF YE'LL BUY THIS *SWORD*.. A *STEAL* AT SEVEN DRAKIS.

A STEAL FOR *YOU*, MAYBE.

BECAUSE IT'S *YOU*, LAD, I'LL MAKE IT *SIX*---

I'VE ONLY GOT *ONE*, SO-- *BY CROM!* HOW QUICKLY THE SKY GROWS *BLACK!*

*FLEE*, MY BROTHERS.. LOCK YOUR DOORS, AND BAR YOUR WINDOWS!

IT IS TIME. *IT IS TIME!*

*AIEEE!* IN MY *GREED*, I FORGOT.

I MEANT TO CLOSE MY SHOP *EARLY* THIS DAY OF DAYS-- BUT I *FORGOT!*

FORGOT *WHAT*, MAN? WHY IS EVERYONE RUNNING LIKE STARTLED TOADS?

*ANSWER* ME, SMITHY, OR I'LL---

*NO*-- PLEASE-- I'LL *TELL* YE---

BUT-- I DARE NOT BE *LONG* ABOUT IT.

IT'S OUR *TAXES*, Y'SEE.

FORTY PIECES OF *GOLD*-- DUE THIS SAME DAY, EACH AND EVERY *YEAR*.

WE HAVEN'T *PAID* THEM-- AND NOW THE *MASTER'LL* BE SENDING SOMEONE TO-- *COLLECT* 'EM.

*FOOL!* DO YOU THINK THE DRUNKEN KING OF ZAMORA EVEN *REMEMBERS* THIS STINKING HOLE?

I-- DID NOT SPEAK OF THE *KING*.

LOOK, BARBARIAN --*LOOK!*

MY EYES MAKE *SPORT* WITH ME.

IS THAT A *CAT'S HEAD* I SEE--- FORMING OUT OF THE VERY *MIST?*

*MORE* THAN A CAT, STRANGER-- FAR, *FAR* MORE.

IT IS *SHE*.. *SHE!*

SHE, SMITH? WHO DO YOU --?

MORRIGAN, MACHA, AND NEMAIN!!

THIS STRONGEST OF *OATHS* TORN FROM HIS LIPS, THE YOUNG CIMMERIAN STANDS SUDDENLY *FROZEN* -- SENSING THAT HE IS IN THE PRESENCE OF A THING *NOT OF THIS WORLD* ---

-- A SENSATION *SHATTERED* THE NEXT INSTANT, AS KNIFE-EDGED *TALONS* SPLINTER A FLIMSY WOODEN CART ---

*HAH!* THAT'S NO *GHOST-BEAST*, FELLOW --

-- BUT A CREATURE AS REAL AS THE *LION* I SLEW IN THE GARDENS OF *YARA*.

I NEVER *DID* LIKE THE IDEA OF FLEEING LIKE A HARE-- NOT WHILE I'VE GOT A *SWORD-HILT* IN MY FIST.

BESIDES, *THERE'S* TWO WHO DIDN'T RUN *FAST* ENOUGH --

AND ONE OF THEM IS A *PRETTY* PACKAGE, TO *BOOT!*



CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

YOU! LIZARD-CHASER! OLD EATER-OF-FROGS!

HERE'S COLD STEEL FOR YOU -- IF YOU'VE A TASTE FOR IT.

IT--IT'S SEEN YOU -- IT'S TURNING--!

LET IT TURN, THEN --AND COME FACE TO FACE WITH DEATH.

BUT, ON THE INSTANT, IT IS THE BARBARIAN WHO GLIMPSES THE GRINNING SKULL OF DOOM--AS STRIPED LIGHTNING CRACKLES --

--AND MAN-FORGED METAL GIVES WAY LIKE A BLADE OF BRITTLE GLASS!

MIGHTY IS THE YOUTH CALLED CONAN -- LIKE A HEADSTRONG YOUNG BULL OF THE MARSHLANDS---

---YET THE SPRINGING TIGRESS HURLS HIM FROM HIS FEET AS IF HE WERE, INSTEAD, SOME TREMBLING CALF--

--AS VISE-LIKE JAWS CLAMP DOWN WITH FORCE ENOUGH TO REND FLESH FROM GLEAMING BONE -- IF THEY WOULD BUT MOVE!

CROM'S DEVILS!

YOU ARE A DEMON-THING, AFTER ALL.

THEN -- WHY DON'T YOU STRIKE -- AND HAVE DONE WITH IT?

IS IT SOME FEAR-SPAWNED *FANTASY* THAT HAPPENS NEXT-- SOME FLEETING *PHANTOM* OF THE MIND AND SENSES ---

--THAT NOW MAKES CONAN THINK HE HEARS A *VOICE*--

-- A WHISPER FROM THE NETHER SIDE OF THE *UNIVERSE*, THAT SEEMS TO SAY: "I SHALL *NOT* HARM YOU. NOT *NOW*. NOT *EVER*."

THEN, LIKE A SOUNDLESS *SPECTRE*--

HOLD! COME BACK--!

COME--- BACK.

*WHAT?* YOU'RE A *BRAVE* ONE--BUT ARE YE *DAFT*, AS WELL?

IF SHE RETURNS --SHE'LL BE THIRSTING FOR *ALL* OUR BLOODS.

MAYBE HE'S IN *LEAGUE* WITH HER. WHY ELSE DIDN'T SHE *KILL* HIM WHEN SHE HAD A CHANCE?

WHO *ARE* YOU-- THAT DARED STAND AGAINST THAT *SHE-FIEND*---

--TO SAVE *MY* LIFE-- AND MY *CHILD'S*?

I AM *CONAN*---A CIMMERIAN.

BUT, WHY DO YOU SPEAK OF THAT STRIPED BEAST AS IF IT WERE A *WOMAN*?

WAS IT NOT A MERE *TIGER*--LIKE MANY ANOTHER?

*NAY*, MAN --AS WE'LL TELL YE WHILE THERE'S STILL *TIME*--

"FOR, WE'LL DOUBTLESS *PAY* FOR THIS RESPITE ANYWAY-- AND *SOONER* THAN WE'D LIKE!

"A BEAST LIKE ANY OTHER, DID YE SAY? YE'D KNOW YOUR FOLLY, OUTLANDER, IF YE COULD GAZE UPON THAT RIBBONED FORM NOW---

"Y'SEE, THERE'S THOSE WHO'VE HIDDEN OUT IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOON---

"..AND VOW THEY'VE SEEN HER SHED HER FELINE SPELL--- TO WALK AS A WOMAN ONCE MORE.

"YET, THERE'S OTHERS SAY WE SHOULD FEEL NO SCORN FOR ZEPHRA-- DAUGHTER OF ZUKALA--

"FOR SHE WAS BORN WHEN THE WIND WAS OUT OF THE NORTH--- AND WHEN THE GREY LIGHT LIFTED FOR MORN-- THAT TIME WHICH IS CALLED-- ZUKALA'S HOUR!

"SUCH ONES, THEY SAY, ARE CURSED WITH SECOND SIGHT--- THE POWER TO LIFT THE VEIL THAT HIDES THE FUTURE--

"AND CAN IT BE A KINDNESS TO FORESEE-- THE HOUR OF YOUR OWN DEATH?"

BUT, WE'LL WASTE NO MORE WORDS ON HER.

IT'S HER FATHER WHO'S THE TRUE DEVIL HERE ZUKALA!

AYE! HE LIVES IN YONDER CASTLE-- AND TAXES US TILL WE'RE PICKED CLEAN.

THERE'S MONEY IN IT FOR THE ONE WHO RIDS US OF THAT MONSTER!

WHAT SAY YOU TO THAT, STRANGER?

I SAY-- I'LL HEAR MORE ABOUT THIS ZUKALA---

--OVER A FLAGON OF FRESH-POURED WINE.



CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

OF COURSE, OF COURSE!

BUT FIRST, LET US TEND TO YOUR WOUNDS--

THEY'RE ONLY SCRATCHES. TELL ME OF ZUKALA, AND OF HIS TIGRESS DAUGHTER.

IT'S SAID THEY'RE AGELESS-- THAT TIME CAN NEVER TOUCH THEM.

AND TRUE IT IS-- FOR ONCE I BEHELD THE GIRL, DANCING 'NEATH THE STARS, WHEN SHE WAS YOUNG, AND I WAS YOUNG.

NOW SHE IS STILL YOUNG-- WHILE I GROW OLD AND WITHERED.

WHERE'S THE FAIRNESS IN THAT? DEATH TO THEM, SAYS I--

"--DEATH TO THEM BOTH!"

FATHER--?

ZEPHRA, MY DARLING.

HAVE MY BELOVED SUBJECTS SENT THEIR JUST TRIBUTE AT LAST?

NO, MY FATHER---

THEY--SET FORTH NO GOLD FOR ME--- THEY--

THE UN-GRATEFUL SWINE!

BUT, WHY SO PALE, MY PET-- LIKE SOME THIN-BLOODED MORTAL?

I--I DO NOT KNOW, SIRE. I---

...WE'RE *POOR* MEN, BUT HONEST AND *STRAIGHTFORWARD.*

WE WANT ZUKALA *DISPOSED OF*... AND WILL *PAY* FOR THE PRIVILEGE.

I'M BLUNT *MYSELF.*

HOW *MUCH?*

FORTY PIECES OF *GOLD*-- THE SAME PRICE THAT DEVIL-WIZARD WOULD EXACT FROM *US*--TO BE PAID ONE *LAST* YEAR---

*ALMOST* ENOUGH... BUT NOT *QUITE.*

--BUT THIS TIME, TO *YOU.*

WHAT *ELSE* WOULD YOU HAVE? WE'RE NOT *RICH BARONS,* LIKE THOSE YOU DOUBTLESS HOPE TO ROB IN *SHADIZAR.*

WOULD YOU LEAVE US NO-*THING?*

I WANT NO MORE *MONEY,* OLD MAN--JUST A CERTAIN *WEAPON*--

THE DRAGON-HILT *BLADE* WHICH THE SWORDSMITH TRIED TO SELL ME.

*DONE.* AND A *SMALL* PRICE TO PAY, FOR FREEDOM FROM THAT SORCEROUS *TYRANT!*

THEN, I'LL *GET* IT--- AND BE ON MY *WAY.*

*THEN, AS THE DOORS CLOSE BEHIND THE CIMMERIAN---*

I'VE NEVER KNOWN YOU TO BE SO *GENER-OUS,* MY FRIEND.

CAN *YOU* PERHAPS BE THINKING--WHAT I KNOW WE *OTHERS* HAVE IN MIND?

I ONLY KNOW THAT, EVEN *IF* THE STRIPLING SOMEHOW SLAYS ZUKALA, HE MUST RETURN *HERE* TO GET HIS MONEY--

---AND THERE ARE MANY *ACCIDENTS* WHICH MAY BEFALL AN IGNORANT *BAR-BARIAN*--SO VERY FAR FROM HOME.

High in his dim, ghost-haunted tower *Zukala* sits alone---

Like a *spider,* spinning his webs of *power* Upon his moon-pale throne---

All through the long, star-spectral *night*
The tower knows no tread ...

He *does not sleep* and his eyes are deep
As the seas of Falgarai...

And he moves his sceptre but to sweep The dim *stars* out of the sky.

...Save for, sometimes, the eerie, light
Swift footfalls of the *dead*...

And when the wind is out of the *east*
And the bent moon's silver gleam
Makes pale the stars like *ghosts* at feast ...

...Zukala sits a-dream...!



CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

BEFORE ZAMORA WAS, **ACHERON** WAS-- THAT MOST EVIL OF EMPIRES -- AND **PYTHON**, ITS PURPLE-TOWERED CITY--

--NOW **DEAD** THESE THREE THOUSAND YEARS, TRAMPLED 'NEATH BARBARIAN HEELS--!

BEFORE ACHERON WAS, **ATLANTIS** WAS-- AND THE MAN-LEGEND **KULL**, WHO ROSE TO SIT THE TOPAZ THRONE--!

AND BEFORE ATLANTIS WAS --**I WAS!**

--THE CALL OF **ZUKALA!**

**COME**, THUS, IN **MY** NAME-- AT MY CALL--

I HAVE JOURNEYED, O WIZARD, FROM OUT THE **LOST LAND**-- IN ANSWER TO THY SUMMONS.

WHAT **WILT** THOU OF THE DEMON **JAGGTA-NOGA**-- FOR, THAT MUST HE **DO!**

**YOU** MUST ACCOMPLISH -- WHAT MY DAUGHTER COULD **NOT.**

THE **VILLAGERS** BEYOND ARE WITHHOLDING FROM ME MY PROPER **TRIBUTE**-- MINE BY RIGHT OF **POWER.**

I WANT THEM **STRIPPED** OF THAT TRIBUTE--

-- OR I WANT THEM **DEAD!**

NOW GO--- AND DO YOU MY BIDDING!

THE PEASANTS' GOLD MEANS LITTLE TO ME-- BUT IT REMINDS THE FOOLS JUST WHO IS MASTER --AND WHO IS SLAVE.

I GO--AND I OBEY, O WIZARD.

NOW, WANDERER-- YOU SHALL TELL ME WHY YOU HAVE--

KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT, UNTIL---

=MMFFF!=

AHHH- HIS STEPS RECEDE DOWN THE CORRIDOR.

YOU CAN ONLY BE ZEPHRA-- DAUGHTER OF THE ONE CALLED ZUKALA.

IS IT TRUE YOU CAN SEE THE FUTURE --AND THAT YOU CAN TURN YOURSELF INTO--A WILD BEAST?

I'VE SEEN STRANGE THINGS IN MY DAY, BUT THAT--

--IS HARD TO BELIEVE, CONAN?

BELIEVE, ALL THE SAME-- FOR HOW ELSE WOULD I KNOW YOUR NAME?

BELIEVE THIS ALSO-- THAT, IN THE MOMENT WE CLASHED-- AND AGAIN, WHEN I FAINTED, CHILD-LIKE, IN MY FATHER'S ARMS--

I KNEW YOU WERE THE MAN I MUST LOVE-- THE MAN WHO SHALL WATCH THE AGES FLOW, AT MY SIDE.

WHAT? WHOA--SLOW DOWN, GIRL-- THIS ALL GOES TOO FAST FOR ME.

LIFE GOES TOO FAST, CONAN-- FOR I HAVE LOOKED INTO OUR FUTURES, YOURS AND MINE--

AND I HAVE DIMLY SEEN YOU STANDING OVER MY BODY--

--A GLEAMING AXE IN YOUR GREAT HANDS.

BUT-- HOLD ME, MY LOVE --HOLD ME!

FOR, THAT MOMENT MAY BE A YEAR AWAY--OR A CENTURY--

OR IT MAY NEVER HAPPEN, MY DAUGHTER!

--NOT IF I SLAY THIS BASE INTERLOPER-- AND LET JAGGTA-NOGA DRAG HIS SOUL BACK TO THE LOST LAND!
NO, FATHER-- NO!
CROM'S DEVILS! DO DOORS MEAN NO-THING IN THIS PLACE?
BUT, NO MATTER-- FOR, YOU'RE SOLID ENOUGH NOW.
MAKE READY TO PAY, WIZARD, FOR THE SINS OF ALL THE YEARS YOU HAVE LIVED.
INSOLENT PUP!
USE THAT WEAPON TO STICK PIGS--
-- NOT TO THREATEN THE LIKES OF ZUKALA!
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BY ANY RIGHTS, YOUNG CONAN NOW SHOULD DIE--- BY ANY RIGHTS, THE BURST WHICH FLASHES LIKE LIGHTNING SHOULD REDUCE HIM TO WHIMPERING ATOMS---
BUT, THE CIMMERIAN MOVES MORE SWIFTLY THAN ANY TIMID ZAMORIAN-- HE EVADES THE SPARK THAT WOULD HAVE ENGULFED HIM---
AND THEN, LIKE A WOLF AT BAY, HE STRIKES--!
WHAT MADNESS IS THIS?
I HIT HIM FULL FORCE --AND MERELY STAGGERED HIM!?
WELL, ONE MORE BLOW, AND SURELY--
NO, CONAN-- LET HIM GO--- PLEASE..
MY MASK! MY MASK--!
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YOU SHALL BURN FOR THIS, BARBARIAN.

DO YOU HEAR ME? YOU SHALL BURN!

MY SWORD NEVER TOUCHED HIS FLESH--ONLY THAT MASK OF HIS.

THE MASK IS THE SOURCE OF HIS POWER, CONAN.

WHY THEN HAS HE FLED LIKE A FRIGHTENED STEER?

BUT NOW, IT IS YOU WHO SHOULD FLEE.

YOU STAND NO CHANCE AGAINST HIS SORCERY--NO CHANCE AT ALL!

YOU CAN SAY THAT?

YOU, WHO PLEADED FOR HIS LIFE, MERE SECONDS AGO?

WHY CAME YOU HERE SEEKING ZUKALA--

AH, THERE HE--

--WITH DEATH COILED IN YOUR FIST?

GODS! MY SWORD HAS BECOME--A VENOMOUS SERPENT!

I THOUGHT YOU SAID--HIS MASK WAS HIS POWER.

IT STILL REMAINS HALF-INTACT---

AND SO HE CAN STILL TURN A TRICK OR TWO, CAN HE?

--SO CAN I!

DO NOT HARM HIM, SIRE! HE IS MY CHOSEN MATE.

WELL, AFTER I RID MYSELF OF THIS HISSING DOOM--

THEN YOU SHALL CHOOSE ANOTHER.. OR A HUNDRED OTHERS---

FOR--THIS ARROGANT ONE MUST DIE!

MAYBE I WOULD--IF YOUR AIM WERE THE EQUAL OF YOUR MAGIC.

BUT NOW, MY NEXT BLOW WILL SPLIT YOUR SKULL AS EASILY AS I SPLINTERED THAT ALTAR.

AND YET--BECAUSE OF THE GIRL... I'D SOONER NOT KILL YOU.

MATCH THE PRICE THE VILLAGERS OFFERED ME TO SLAY YOU--AND I'LL GO MY WAY!

ACCEPT HIS OFFER, MY FATHER!

WHAT IS MONEY TO US?

WE HAVE SEEN THE EONS PASS, FLOATING LIKE BURNING CLOUDS..

NO!

IT IS TRUE--THAT I UNDERESTIMATED THE BARBARIAN--- FOR IT HAS BEEN LONG SINCE ANY DARED DEFY ME.

BUT NOW--THE THIRST FOR TRIUMPH MINGLES WITH THE BLOOD IN MY THROAT--AND IT MUST BE SATISFIED!

ZEPHRA! BECOME ONCE MORE THE RAGING BEAST YOU WERE --AND REND THE FOOL LIMB FROM LIMB!

THUS DO I COMMAND --I, ZUKALA-- YOUR FATHER!

AND--BECAUSE IT IS MY FATHER WHO COMMANDS ME---

CAN I-- REFUSE THE CALL--?



CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

THE TIGRESS!

THEN-- THE VILLAGERS SPOKE THE *TRUTH*.

THE *LAST* TRUTH THAT YOU SHALL EVER *KNOW*.

SLAY HIM, MY DAUGHTER! SLAY HIM!

BUT *AGAIN*, AS IF IN A DREAM, COMES THAT WORLD-DISTANT WHISPER: "*NO*, FATHER! I SHALL *NOT* HARM HIM. *NOT NOW*. NOT *EVER*."

THEN -- YOU HAVE *DOOMED* YOUR SIRE-- BENEATH THIS SAVAGE'S *AXE*!

NOT IF THOU DOST NOT *WISH* TO DIE, O WIZARD!

WHAT *VOICE* IS THAT--- WHICH ECHOES AS IF FROM BEYOND THE *GRAVE*?

FROM BEYOND *YOUR* GRAVE AT LEAST, FOOL.

*TURN*, BARBARIAN -- AND SEE THE FACE AND FORM OF *FEAR INCARNATE*!

*CROM*!

GIRLS WHO BECOME TIGERS -- AYE, EVEN WIZARDS -- ARE BUT *HUMAN* IN THEIR OWN WAY. BUT *THIS*-- THIS IS SOMETHING FROM -- *OUTSIDE*-- AND THE SIGHT FILLS CONAN WITH NUMBING *TERROR*--!

FORGET ABOUT THE *MONEY*.

*KILL HIM*!!

AS YOU *DESIRE*, O WIZARD. BUT--WHAT *CREATURE* IS THIS-- WHICH LEAPS HEADLONG TO ITS OWN *DEATH*?

ZEPHRA-- *NO*!

RRRRRR

CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY THIS SHE-BEAST, AS MAGICAL AS HIMSELF, THE HELL-FIEND FALLS WITH THUNDEROUS IMPACT--

--ONLY TO RISE AGAIN!

KILL HER, THING OF THE NETHER DEPTHS--

AND THEN TURN--TURN UPON THE BARBARIAN!

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, MAN?

WOULD YOU DOOM YOUR OWN DAUGHTER--JUST BECAUSE SHE WOULD NOT DESTROY ME?

AYE! ALL MUST DIE WHO OPPOSE MY WILL! ALL!

THEN, CONAN'S FURY IS HORRIBLE TO BEHOLD--AS HE LIFTS THE AGE-OLD SORCERER, LIKE SOME SMALL, WHIMPERING RODENT--

NEVER! NEVER!

CALL OFF YOUR DEMON, WIZARD--OR I'LL---

BAH! YOU'RE HARDLY WORTH THE KILLING.

STILL, I'D TEND TO YOU--IF I HAD THE TIME.

BUT NOW, I MUST DO WHAT YOU WILL NOT--

I MUST SAVE THE GIRL!

THIS *AXE* MAY PROVE AS USELESS AS HAVE *TWO SWORDS* THIS DAY--

BUT I WON'T LET HER *DIE* TRYING TO SAVE *ME.*'

*AARRRAHH!*

*SOME* BLIND GOD IS SMILING UPON ME, AT LEAST.

YOU DON'T *BLEED*-- BUT THIS SORCERER'S AXE CAN *HURT* YOU!

AND I YOU.. WITH RENDING *TALONS.*

BUT FIRST--

*ZEPHRA!*

*BEYOND RECKONING* IS THE HELL-BORN STRENGTH OF JAGGTA-NOGA--STRENGTH WHICH HURLS THE SNARLING SHE-BEAST THRU THE AIR LIKE A *BROKEN TOY*--

--AND THEN, A SHE-BEAST *NO LONGER*, BUT ONLY A *WOMAN*--

--SOFT, AND VULNERABLE, AND LYING DEATHLY *STILL.*



CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

NOW, INSECT--MAKE READY TO DIE!

MAYBE I WILL, MONSTER---

BUT I'LL DIE FIGHTING--AND HACKING AWAY AT YOU WITH THESE TWO BLADES.

MY DAUGHTER --MY ZEPHRA-- WHAT HAVE I DONE TO YOU?

YOUR DAUGHTER, WIZARD? SHE IS NOTHING. LET HER PERISH.

IT IS DEATH WHICH YOU SHOULD WORSHIP--NOT LIFE.

FOR, EVEN LIFE WHICH SPANS THE AGES IS AS NAUGHT TO JAGGTA-NOGA.

ENOUGH!

I HAVE NOT POWER ENOW TO DESTROY YOU, DEMON--

BUT, MY SORCERY STILL CAN SEND YOU BACK---

-- BACK TO THE DARKSOME PIT WHICH SPAWNED YOU!

NO! NOOO!

THE DEVIL-THING IS GONE. NOW YOU AND I, WIZARD--

FOOL! YOU WOULD YET MENACE ME WITH A CHILD'S PLAYTHING?

THEN YOU STILL DO NOT COMPREHEND THE FORCES YOU HAVE SEEN UNLEASHED HERE THIS NIGHT.

BUT YOU SHALL UNDERSTAND--WHEN WE MEET ANOTHER TIME---

AND ON THAT DAY, YOU SHALL FACE THE FULL POWER OF ZUKALA--AND YOU SHALL TREMBLE BEFORE YOU DIE.

CONAN-- CONAN--

DO YOU HEAR, BARBARIAN? DO YOU *HEAR?*

SHE *LIVES*-- BUT YOU HAVE TAKEN MY DAUGHTER'S *HEART* FROM ME---

AND IT CAN NEVER BE WHOLLY *MINE* AGAIN.

IT IS A *LONELY* THING--AND *MADDENING*--

--TO BE THE *LAST* OF A ONCE-PROUD RACE, AND TO BE *FORSAKEN* BY THE ONLY ONE YOU HOLD DEAR.

AND SO--

"BEWARRRE

*GONE*-- BOTH OF THEM.

IF THEY WERE EVER TRULY *HERE*.

BUT THEY WERE *REAL* ENOUGH, IT SEEMS--FOR THE CASTLE STILL STANDS, AND *GOLDEN COINS* YET STUD THE FLOOR WHERE THEY HAVE FALLEN---

...*FIFTY* GOLD PIECES, THEIR GLITTER BLINDING THE CIMMERIAN TO THOUGHTS OF A DEMON--A WIZARD--- AND A GIRL WHO OFFERED HIM--*IMMORTALITY*. A GIRL WHO---

BUT *NO*-- IT IS BETTER TO COUNT THE *GOLD*-- TO RECALL THAT MORE OR LESS THIS SUM WAS OFFERED HIM TO *SLAY* ZUKALA.

YET, ISN'T THE MAN-WIZARD *VANISHED*-- AND ISN'T THAT THE SAME THING?

NO NEED TO BOTHER GOING BACK TO THE *VILLAGE*--NO NEED AT *ALL*---

--NOT WHEN THE ROAD TO SIN-DRENCHED *SHADIZAR* WINDS BY THE THE FOOT OF THE HILL--!

FINIS